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**Written Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 467,  
An Act Concerning Municipal Implementation Of Criminal Justice Reforms**

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, and distinguished member of the Judiciary Committee. My name is David McGuire, and I am the Legislative and Policy Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 467, An Act Concerning Municipal Implementation of Criminal Justice Reforms.

As an organization dedicated to liberty, justice, and equality for all, the ACLU of Connecticut strongly supports the reforms included in this bill. The ACLU of Connecticut has long advocated for law enforcement officials to use body cameras, and we support this bill's move to exclude body cameras from police union contract negotiations. When police use them correctly, body cameras improve police accountability, deter misconduct by law enforcement officials and community members, and can provide objective evidence in even difficult situations. In addition, at a time when the relationship between communities and police is fraught, law enforcement officials' use of body cameras can be a meaningful gesture of goodwill toward the public. Allowing body cameras to be a contract negotiation point, however, presents a backdoor way for some police to cynically exploit tight budgets to avoid being forthcoming with the public. Community members' rights to police transparency should not be a bargaining chip.

Body cameras are most useful, however, if states store their footage in a way that ensures usefulness for investigations of police or public misconduct and that retains the privacy rights of individuals who appear in footage. We therefore approve of this bill's proposal to engage the Connecticut Sentencing Commission, an independent body, to study the logistics and costs of storing body camera data, but we are apprehensive of what that may mean for individuals' privacy rights. We should not trade strong privacy protections for streamlining body camera programs, nor do we need to. The ACLU of Connecticut believes that the "flagging" method is the best way forward. This method allows the state to identify and "flag" videos that contain valuable evidence, show police use of force, or demonstrate a potential violation of police conduct rules. Meanwhile, the state can delete more routine body camera footage, thereby avoiding keeping hours of videos of innocent people going about their business.

The ACLU of Connecticut has also long supported removing roadblocks to employment for people who have made mistakes. At a time when one in three American adults has a criminal record and 95% of state prisoners will return to society, employers should judge job applicants not on their past mistakes but on their skills and qualifications. Currently, however, many employers automatically screen out applicants who check the box indicating they have a criminal record on initial applications, making it extremely challenging for individuals with criminal records to successfully reintegrate into society. In addition, we also know that the majority of people leaving prison also have children. As a result, discriminatory hiring practices do not just harm people who have made mistakes—they harm innocent children and families. Evidence shows, however, that employers are more likely to offer someone with a criminal record a fair chance at a job if they have the chance to review that application's qualifications before asking about criminal history. By pushing questions about criminal history to later in the hiring process, this bill would hold Connecticut to that standard.

Because racial minorities are nearly three times more likely to have a criminal record than their white peers, discriminatory hiring practices based on criminal record also disproportionately harm African Americans and Latinos. This bill is therefore a modest step toward remediating the long-term consequences of Connecticut's flawed and racially unbalanced criminal justice system.

Particularly in this difficult economic climate, this bill would also save our state money by helping people with criminal records and their families to succeed as law-abiding, taxpaying citizens. For someone reentering society, a fair chance at a job can break the cycles of poverty and crime by allowing them to support themselves and their families. Studies show that making it easier for people with criminal records to find adequate employment also significantly decreases the likelihood that they will return to our criminal justice system, thereby decreasing the prison population and state correctional costs.

We urge this committee to support Senate Bill 467. Passing this bill will improve police accountability and public perceptions of police, remove discriminatory roadblocks to employment, and offer modest steps toward reforming a flawed criminal justice system.